

Information for the Patient

About leprosy...

They will be cured of leprosy if they take the drugs in the blister packs as advised.

They must complete a full course of treatment: 6 blisters for PB patients and 12 blisters for MB patients.

The drugs stop the disease from spreading.

Patients can lead normal lives. They can live at home, go to school, work, play, get married, have children, participate in social events...

... their treatment

The MDT blister packs are free of charge.

They should keep the blister packs in a dry, safe, and shady place and out of the reach of children.

If the drugs are spoiled (changed colour, broken), the health worker will replace them.

... possible problems

The medicines will turn their urine red and their skin darker. Patients should not worry: both will return to normal once the treatment is completed.

They must go immediately to a health centre if they have any problems (pain, fever, malaise, new lesions, muscle weakness ...).

They should return for a check-up after they complete their treatment.

If they already have disabilities, tell them how to protect themselves from injuries (see page 36).

Leprosy can be
easily cured.





Accompanied MDT ensures that patients have the full course of treatment.

Accompanied MDT

Accompanied MDT has been designed to **address a frequent problem in field programmes**. Patients often have to interrupt their treatment because of a shortage of drugs at the health centre, poor access to the health services or simply because no one is at the health centre when they come to collect their treatment.

Accompanied MDT gives patients a choice: they can collect their treatment at regular intervals from the health centre or **take the entire course with them when diagnosed**. Patients should choose someone close to them to accompany them with their treatment.

How to use Accompanied MDT

Give patients their first MDT dose at the health centre. Ask patients if they want to take all the blister packs with them or if they would prefer to collect them from the health centre at regular intervals.

If they choose Accompanied MDT, give PB patients 6 PB blister packs and MB patients 12 MB blister packs. **Make sure that every patient and accompanying person understand the treatment, how to take the drugs, as well as possible problems** (see page 22).

Reassure patients that they can lead normal lives.

If problems do occur, tell patients to come back.

Ask patients to return after their treatment is complete.

Sample Patient Card

Key Tasks at the Health Centre to provide MDT Services

Identification Data (name, address, age, etc.):						
Number of skin lesions			Remarks (Any complaints, referrals, other events like default and death)			
Classification	PB (1-5 patches)	MB (more than 5)				
Date of detection						
Visible disability on detection	Yes	No				
Date of first dose of MDT						
Number of doses given	2	3				
	7	8	9	10	11	12 last dose for MB
Accompanied MDT given	Yes	No				
Date of cure						

Make leprosy diagnosis and treatment available, free of charge, on every working day.
 Keep adequate stocks of all four types of MDT blister packs (child and adult MB/PB).
 Keep a **simple register** to record the drugs received and distributed, and the remaining balance.
 Maintain a **simple recording and reporting** system to keep track of patients under your care.
Display posters on leprosy at the health centre and in public places.



Keep adequate stocks of MDT at your health centre.

Important Points about MDT

Safety

MDT is very safe and effective in curing leprosy.

MDT is safe during pregnancy.

MDT is safe for patients being treated for tuberculosis (TB) as well as those who are HIV-positive.

Rifampicin is common to the treatment of leprosy and TB and must be given in the doses required for TB.

Treatment

Give MDT free of charge to all leprosy patients.

Help ensure that patients complete their treatment.

Give patients enough blister packs to last until their next visit.

Use **Accompanied MDT** for all patients who find it difficult to visit the health centre regularly.

If a person cured of leprosy presents new skin patches with definite loss of sensation, consider this as a case of relapse. Re-treat with appropriate MDT regimen.

MDT supplies

Do not use MDT blister packs

- beyond the expiry date
- if the drugs are damaged, or have changed colour, or if a capsule is broken

Keep MDT blister packs in a cupboard or a wooden box.

If MDT blister packs for children are not available, remove tablets from an adult pack for the appropriate dose.



**MDT is very safe
and effective
in curing leprosy.**

When Treatment is Completed

Congratulate the patient for the successful completion of treatment.

Thank family and friends who accompanied the patient for their support.

Reassure patients that **they are completely cured of leprosy.**

If patches are still visible, reassure the patient that **these will gradually disappear.**

If disabilities exist, tell patients how to protect themselves from injuries (see page 36).

Tell them to return to the health centre if they have any questions or problems.

In the rare cases where patients may see a new skin patch, they must come back for checkup.

Enlist the patient's support to:

- spread the message in their community that leprosy is curable and treatment is free,
- **to advise people with similar patches to go to the health centre.**



**Leprosy should be just
a closed chapter
in the life of a person.**

Management of Complications

Leprosy Reactions

Patients can develop reactions, which are part of the natural course of the disease. Reactions **are not** a side effect of MDT. They are the body's response to leprosy and do not mean that the disease is becoming worse or that the treatment is not working.

Signs of reactions include:

Existing skin lesions become **reddish and swollen**;
Painful **reddish** nodules appear;
Peripheral nerves become **painful, tender and swollen**;
Signs of nerve damage such as loss of sensation and muscle weakness;
Fever and malaise;
Hands and feet may be swollen.

Managing Reactions

If a patient has any of these symptoms, he or she must go immediately to a health centre for treatment. **Reactions require urgent treatment with special medicines as they can lead to irreversible deformities.**

Give aspirin or paracetamol to reduce pain and fever. Advise the patients to rest as that is essential.

Maximum dose of prednisolone is 1 mg per kg of body weight.

If you have a course of corticosteroids (e.g. prednisolone), please administer:
40 mg daily for weeks 1 and 2,
30 mg daily for weeks 3 and 4,
20 mg daily for weeks 5 and 6,
15 mg daily for weeks 7 and 8,
10 mg daily for weeks 9 and 10,
5 mg daily for weeks 11 and 12.

It is important that you examine the patient and reduce the dose of corticosteroids every two weeks.



Patients must continue to take MDT during a reaction.

Reactions are not a side effect of MDT.



Common Side Effects of MDT

Red coloured urine

This is due to the colour of rifampicin, which is taken once every month. This lasts for only a few hours after taking the drug. Please assure patient that it is harmless.

Darkening of skin

This is due to clofazimine used daily for treating MB patients. This is harmless and will disappear within a few months after completing the treatment. Please encourage patient to take the medicines regularly.

Allergy

As with any medicine, some patients may be allergic to one of the drugs in MDT. Most commonly there will be severe itching and red/dark spots on the skin. In such cases, ask the patient to stop taking the medicines and refer him or her to the nearest hospital.



**Over 10 million people
have been cured
of leprosy with MDT.**

Simple measures to prevent disabilities

Patients with insensitive hands or feet injure themselves without noticing it. These wounds can get infected and over time, lead to irreversible deformities. The wounds should be managed just as you would any other cuts or wounds, dry skin, or eye problems.

The best way to prevent disabilities is early diagnosis and prompt treatment with MDT.



Whenever you refer a patient, write down details of the complaint, when this first occurred and medicines taken. Send this note with the patient to show to the doctor.

Care of feet	
Feet with dry cracks and fissures	Advise to soak feet for 20 minutes every day in water and apply cooking oil /vaseline regularly. Advise to use shoes or slippers to protect their feet from injury.
Blister on the sole or between toes	Dress blister with clean cloth. Apply cotton wool and bandage.
Feet with ulcers without any discharge	Clean the ulcer with soap and water. Cover with clean dressing. Advise rest.
Feet with ulcers with discharge	Clean the ulcer. Apply antiseptic dressing. Advise rest. If no improvement in 4 weeks, refer to hospital.

Care of hands	
Injury on hand while working/cooking	Clean wound and apply clean dressing. Advise rest. Advise to use a cloth to protect the hands when touching hot or sharp objects.
Hands with dry cracks and fissures	Advise to soak hands for 20 minutes every day in water and to apply vaseline or cooking oil regularly.

Care of eyes	
Patient presents with red eye, pain, blurring of vision and discharge	Give aspirin or paracetamol. If available apply 1% atropine drops and steroid ointment. Keep eye covered with a pad. Whenever possible, advise to go to the hospital.
Patient with injury on cornea (corneal ulcer)	Apply antibiotic ointment. Keep eye covered with a pad. Wherever possible, advise to go to the hospital.

How You Can Eliminate Leprosy From Your Community

Look out for skin lesions during your routine activities.
Diagnose leprosy and start MDT treatment immediately.
Give Accompanied MDT to all patients who cannot visit the health centre regularly.
Encourage patients to complete the full course of treatment.
Keep adequate stocks of MDT at the health centre.

Inform the community that:

- skin patches without sensation, which do not itch, can be leprosy,
- **treatment to cure leprosy is available free of charge** at all health centres,
- **the drugs stop the spread of leprosy,**
- early treatment prevents disabilities,
- **patients who have completed their treatment are cured even if they have deformities,**
- patients can lead perfectly normal lives.

Display posters about leprosy in public places.
Enlist the support of others (e.g. community leaders, teachers, religious authorities and traditional practitioners) to **spread positive messages about leprosy.**



**You can eliminate leprosy
from your community!**

This document is not a formal publication of the World Health Organization (WHO), and all rights are reserved by the Organization.

The document may, however, be freely reviewed, abstracted, reproduced and translated, in part or in whole, but is not for sale nor for use in conjunction with commercial purposes.